

Message Text

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SUBJECT: KOREAN REACTIONS TO JIMMY CARTER

BEGIN SUMMARY: KOREAN PRESS AND OFFICIALS WERE QUICK TO SEIZE NOMINATION OF CARTER AS OCCASION TO AIR SOME OF THEIR FAVORITE THEMES: NEED FOR CONTINUED US TROOP PRESENCE IN KOREA, NEED FOR PLANNED AND GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS, ONLY WHEN TIME IS RIGHT, AND NEED TO GUARANTEE PEACE ON KOREAN PENINSULA THROUGH STRENGTH. GENERAL CONSENSUS REACHED IS THAT US POLICY WILL NOT CHANGE GREATLY, NO MATTER WHO IS ELECTED IN NOVEMBER. END SUMMARY.

1. DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION AND JIMMY CARTER WERE SUBJECTS OF MAJOR COVERAGE IN KOREAN NEWSPAPERS DURING WEEK OF JULY 12. WEEKEND COVERAGE FEATURED BIOGRAPHY AND PROFILES OF JIMMY CARTER, AND EDITORIAL COMMENT ON HIS VIEWS, PARTICULARLY THOSE CONCERNING KOREA, FOLLOWED DURING THE WEEKEND. POPULAR MAGAZINES HAVE RUN SUBSTANTIAL STORIES UNDER COVER PICTURES OF CARTER. IN ADDITION, VIRTUALLY ALL KOREAN PRESS ON JULY 14 PROMINENTLY FRONT-PAGED EXCERPTS OF JULY 13

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WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE CITING ROKG PRESIDENTIAL AIDE

KIM KYONG-WON'S REMARKS THAT ROKG DOES NOT FEAR JIMMY CARTER'S POLITICAL LINE.

2. ON JULY 14, IMPORTANT JOONG-ANG ILBO BECAME FIRST TO STATE THAT "WE DON'T BELIEVE CARTER WILL COME UP WITH RADICAL CHANGE OF US FOREIGN POLICY." HAN-KOOK ILBO AND CHO-SUN ILBO VOICED SIMILAR BELIEF IN EDITORIALS OVER WEEKEND OF JULY 17, LATTER SEEING "NO SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN AMERICAN SECURITY COMMITMENT TO KOREA," WHOEVER IS ELECTED THE NEXT PRESIDENT. HAN-KOOK ILBO, SECONDING THIS, ADDED THAT "THE ADVISORS TO CARTER AT PRESENT ARE NOT THOSE WHO CAN RAISE SOMETHING DRASTICALLY NEW IN US POLICY TOWARD KOREA."

3. OFFICIAL SEOUL SHINMUN, FOCUSING ITS ATTENTION "ON WHETHER US WILL WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS FROM KOREA IF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WINS THE ELECTION," CONCLUDED THAT DEMS WILL DO SO ONLY IF "CONVINCED THAT ROK CAN DEFEND ITSELF." NEVERTHELESS, MANIFESTING UNDERLYING INTEREST AND SOME NERVOUSNESS, WRITERS CONCLUDED WITH REQUEST THAT DEMS "RE-EXAMINE THE MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE NORTH KOREANS... AND THEIR UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE PREPARATIONS TO TURN OUR COUNTRY INTO ANOTHER VIETNAM."

4. LEADING INDEPENDENT DONGA ILBO, IN EDITORIAL JULY 17, ALSO EVINCE CAUTION, POINTING OUT THAT "CARTER'S POLICY LINE IS NOT CLEAR YET." WRITERS RECALLED THAT CARTER FIRST CALLED FOR THE REMOVAL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS FROM KOREA AND GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF US GROUND TROOPS, BUT THAT HE RETREATED "A FEW STEPS" JUST BEFORE THE CONVENTION, SAYING THE US TROOPS IN KOREA WOULD BE PULLED OUT ONLY WHEN THE SOVIETS GUARANTEED THE SECURITY OF KOREA. WRITERS ATTRIBUTED THIS VAGUENESS ON CARTER'S PART TO ATTEMPT TO AVOID MISTAKES OF MCGOVEN FOUR YEARS AGO, BUT ALSO NOTED THAT PROBLEMS FACING US TODAY "ARE VERY COMPLEX AND NOBODY CAN GIVE CLEAR SOLUTIONS TO ALL OF THEM." WRITERS CONCLUDED THAT CARTER, THOUGH LIKELY TO EMPHASIZE DOMESTIC PROBLEMS MORE THAN THOSE OF FOREIGN POLICY IF ELECTED, "WILL NOT MUCH DEVIATE FROM THE BASIC POLICY LINE PURSUED BY PRESIDENT FORD."

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5. ON JULY 14, THE OFFICIAL SEOUL SHINMUN CARRIED THE MOST COMPLETE EDITORIAL COMMENT SEEN HERE ON CARTER'S INTERVIEW JULY 11 WITH THE LONDON SUNDAY TIMES. RUKUQ EDITORIAL WAS PRINTED IN REACTION TO CARTER'S STATEMENT THAT HE WAS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE SOVIET UNION ON THE PROVISION OF CREDITS IN EXCHANGE FOR SOVIET PLEDGES ON KOREAN SECURITY. WRITERS DIRECTED SPECIAL ATTENTION TO

CARTER'S ASSERTION THAT US FORCES SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM KOREA ON A GRADUAL BASIS. WORRYING THAT SOME SORT OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE OF KOREA'S SECURITY MIGHT BE PUT FORWARD TO REPLACE PRESENT US TROOPS, PAPER WARNED THAT PRESUMED UNDERTAKING BY SOVIETS TO DISCOURAGE NORTH KOREA FROM PROVOKING WAR AGAINST SOUTH KOREA WOULD RUN UP AGAINST FACT THAT THERE IS A LIMIT TO SOVIETS'S INFLUENCE ON P'YONG-YANG REGIME. ASSERTING THAT ULTIMATE OBJECTICE OF P'YONG-YANG'S STRATEGY IS TO COMMUNIZE AND RE-UNIFY WHOLE OF KOREAN PENINSULA BY FORCE AND REVOLUTION, WRITER CONCLUDED THAT "NO ONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO TALK" ABOUT IDEA THAT US FORCES IN SOUTH KOREA COULD BE REPLACED BY SOME SORT OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE OF KOREA'S SECURITY.

6. ON JULY 19. KOREAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, HAHM PYONG-CHON RETURNED TO SEOUL FOR PERIODIC CONSULTATIONS. IN AN AIRPORT INTERVIEW GIVEN PROMINENT FRONT PAGE COVERAGE IN ALMOST ALL KOREAN PAPERS, HAHM SAID THAT US POLICY TOWARD KOREA WOULD NOT CHANGE WHOEVER BECOMES US PRESIDENT. FORNMIN REITERATED SIMILAR LINE WHEN HE TOLD DCM JULY 22 THAT HE SAW NOTHING PARTICULARLY NEW IN CARTER'S FOREIGN POLICY SPEECHES, ALTHOUGH HE ALSO EVINCED GENERAL UNDERCURRENT OF PRESS AND OFFICIAL CONCERN ABOUT CARTER'S TALK OF TROOP REDUCTIONS. BLUE HOUSE SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS YI YONG-HUI PERHAPS SUMMED UP PRIVATE GOVERNMENT REACTION BEST WHEN HE TOLD VISITING US SENATE SECRETARY FRANK VALEO AND POLCOUNS JULY 19 THAT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CARTER'S STATEMENTS HAD NOT YET ADDRESSED THE KOREAN ISSUE IN SUFFICIENT DETAIL FOR KOREANS TO FORM COMPLETE IMPRESSION. WHILE THERE WAS CONSEQUENTLY CONSIDERABLE CAUTION AND SOME NERVOUSNESS IN SEOUL RE SUBJECT, HE WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE THAT THINGS CARTER HAD SAID SO FAR STRUCK KOREANS AS "REASONABLE AND MORALLY HIGH-SOUNDING" AND THAT CARTER CAME ACROSS AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"GOOD MAN." DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THAT BROUGHT CARTER TO FORE, MOREOVER, WAS REASSURING EVIDENCE OF BASIC VIGOR AND GREATNESS OF AMERICAN SYSTEM. KOREANS HOPED, SAID YI, THAT CARTER, OR ANY OTHER LEADER OF US, WOULD PERCEIVE CONTINUED NEED TO MAINTAIN STABILITY OF KOREAN PENINSULA THROUGH SECURITY SUPPORT TO ROK AND WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO SUPERIMPOSE US MORAL STANDARDS ON DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SOUTH KOREA.

8. THE REACTION OF THE OPPOSITION WAS QUITE ANOTHER MATTER. ALMOST TO A MAN, OPPOSITION FIGURES LOOKED FORWARD TO THE POSSIBILITY OF CARTER'S ELECTION WITH INTEREST AND HOPE THAT HE MIGHT SOMEHOW BE PREPARED AND ABLE TO INFLUENCE PRESIDENT PARK TO RELAX INTERNAL POLITICAL CONTROLS. OPPOSITION MEMBERS, LIKE GOVERNMENT HOWEVER,

COMMENT TO US THAT THEY ARE NOT IN FAVOR OF TROOP WITHDRALS
OR REDUCTION OF U.S. SECURITY SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE THESE
ENDS IF SUCH MOVES WOULD IN ANY WAY JEOPARDIZE ROK SECURITY.

9. COMMENT: THERE IS INTENSE INTEREST ON PART KEY KOREANS
IN CARTER'S POSITION ON KOREAN-RELATED ISSUES AND CONSTANT
QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS POLICIES, IN MANNER DESIGNED TO
SEEK REASSURANCE. WHILE KOREANS PROFESS TO BE AND ARE PROBABLY
REASSURED BY RECENT CARTER STATEMENTS ON KOREA, THERE IS
STILL UNDERLYING NERVOUSNESS, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE.
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